CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
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Interchange of Methodist Ministers in the Northern Countries.

During the month of October some 50 Methodist ministers have changed places with a colleague in another Northern country. The period of interchange was usually one week. Such a Northern interchange has taken place before, although not on the same scale. The purpose is to further the feelings of fellowship among the Northern Methodist Churches and to strengthen their co-operation. A similar interchange has been arranged between the Methodist Churches of England and the U.S.A.

DENMARK

The Church of Rome and Mixed Marriages.

The problem of mixed marriages between Roman-Catholics and non-Roman-Catholics recently became acute in Denmark when a Roman-Catholic wife was told by her Church to abstain from sexual intercourse with her husband because he had been divorced and the Roman Church could not regard his first marriage as having been dissolved.

This caused the "Kristeligt Dagblad" in Copenhagen to take the whole issue of mixed marriages up for consideration in an editorial. It says here that despite all difficulties it is possible for the full blessing of God to rest on such a marriage. At a time characterized by a more sympathetic attitude towards other Churches on the part of Rome it must, unfortunately, be noted that the Roman Church is still quite unrelenting in its views on mixed marriages. The paper continues:

"What monstrously inhuman and un-Christian attitude makes the Roman Church stick to the view that a "mixed" marriage, contracted in or blessed by the Evangelical Church of one of the partners, cannot possibly be acknowledged as a true marriage, and that the Roman-Catholic partner must be barred from the fellowship of his or her Church so that he or she may not communicate, nor be confessed or buried according to the order of his or her Church? What brutality prompts the Church of Rome to make it a condition of the acknowledgment of a "mixed" marriage that the partners promise to bring up possible children in the Roman-Catholic faith? What family tragedies have not been the outcome of this demand? And how often do the children not end in religious indifference? The sectarian nature, which after all, clings to the Roman Church is perhaps nowhere more glaring than at this point."

The "Kristeligt Dagblad" concludes the article by advocating that this question be taken up for debate and solution in a true ecumenical spirit.

Foreign Missions Ought to Have Been Consulted.

In the course of the reading in the Danish Parliament of the Government Bill for Aid to Developing Countries (see last number of CN), both the big Opposition Parties criticized that Danish Foreign Missions had not been consulted in connection with the preliminary planning. The spokesman of the Liberal Party described the Danish Missionary Society as "the only place where I have heard really sensible talk about the problems of the developing countries". And, religion playing such a tremendously important part in the developing countries, the spokesman of the Conservative Party further criticized that the public report on the Aid to Developing Countries did not say anything about the necessity of instructing the experts on this Aid in the religious conditions of the respective countries in the same way in which they are instructed about the economic, political, and social conditions.

In a statement to the "Kristeligt Dagblad", Professor Hal Koch, who was the first to criticize publicly the Government Committee on these matters for having neglected to ask for expert assistance from the people engaged in Mission work, has further elaborated his views on the relation of the Church to the Aid to Developing Countries. He points out that the claim for co-operation with the missionary societies was prompted only by a desire for expert handling of these problems so that the large sums of money involved might be put to the best possible use. But at the same time he warns against making the co-operation between the Missions and the Aid to Developing Countries too close, so as to make Christianity identical with Western ideology, the influence of which the Western countries are trying to bring to bear upon life in Asia and Africa through their aid. Even if these efforts should fail, the task of Foreign Missions will still be the same, that is: not the preservation of the culture of the West, but the preaching of the message of Jesus of Nazareth, a task that must be fulfilled regardless of social conditions. However, the Professor feels that in the case of special undertakings of a limited scope a certain co-operation between the Aid to Developing Countries and the missionary societies may be possible.

TV - Series on Church Services, Ceremonies, and Functions.

On the first three Mondays in December the Danish Television will show a series on the services and ceremonies of the Lutheran National Church as part of a public educational programme. The series has been arranged by the two editors of "Church Magazine" in the radio, Mr. Kai Erik Lindquist and Mr. Jørgen Ginnerup. The main emphasis will be partly on factual information about the conduct of the services and ceremonies and their meaning, partly on the posing of questions suitable for further discussion by small and bigger groups watching the screen. The first evening Baptism and Holy Communion will be dealt with and illustrations given on the importance of home, Sunday School, and religious instruction at school to children, baptized as infants. The second programme will deal with marriage, confession, and funeral, and the last one will describe the Sunday service and try to explain the reason for the various parts and their form.

News in Brief:

Archaeologists have unearthed what is considered to be the oldest church in Greenland. It was erected shortly after the year 1000 by the wife of Erik the Red, Tjodhilde, at his seat at Brattahlid near the Skovfjord. Erik the Red was the one who colonized Greenland and his son,

elf the Lucky, discovered America. Both Leif and his mother are be-
lieved to be buried in or near the church, around which altogether
00 graves have been found. The church was built from turf and its
terior measurements were only 5 by 6 metres.

10 Danes have been won for Islam and are now looking for a site
n Copenhagen for a mosque, the Secretary of the Ahmadeyya-movement,
r. Mirza Mubarik Ahmed, said recently during a visit to Denmark.
r.Kamal Yousuf, a young man from Pakistan, who has worked as an Isla-
ic missionary in Oslo for a couple of years, recently moved to Copen-
agen.

The Debate on the Only Prophecy Still Continues.

The debate on the so-called Only (Vitebong) prophecy, according
o which the whole Finnish nation will be destroyed or driven into
aptivity unless there are 600,000 converted and truly believing
hristians in the country before the end of this year, is still going
n in both the religious and profane Press. In the Church paper
Kottimes" Bishop Alajä, Mikkeli (St. Michel), has disassociated himself
rom the prophecy. It is incorrect, he says, to call the Finnish na-
ion "my most beloved people, bearing Israel" as the prophecy does -
hose the quite sufficient Revelation in the Bible says nothing of the
ort. Neither does the Bishop feel that the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah,
hich were to have been spared provided only 10 righteous people were to
e found in them, may give any indication of how God will act in other
ases, and he goes on to say:

"The severely tried nation of Hungary has been no more sinful than
ny other nation. Hardly anybody would dare interpret the high living
tandard of Sweden as a reward for the outstanding righteousness of our
astern neighbour. The march of history is shockingly irrational. Not
nly God, but also the powers of darkness exert their influence on it.

Even more complete in its denunciation of the "prophecy" is the
resident of the Finnish Missionary Society, Professor Eino Juva. Pro-
essor of History, in an article in the "Kotimaa". "It does not bear
he mark of divine origin", he says, and describes the attitude of many
ersymen who accept it as a word from God as responsible. The Pro-
essor believes the "message" to be the expression of the subconscious
spair of a sincere, but spiritually unhealthy human being.

At the same time other Church circles speak in favour of the Only
rophecy. Thus the Christian student magazine, "Ristinen", writes:

"To adopt, as a matter of principle, a suspicious attitude to
prophecy about God taking a hand in historical events only shows that
e has ceased to count with God as the God of history and miracles."

Film Classified as "Not for Children" Should Not be Shown on Television.

The Central Association of the Finnish Lutheran National Church
r Parish Work and the Finnish Union of Temperance Organisations have
tined in an appeal to the Government Cultural Committee that films
assified as "Not for Children" should not be shown on television.
e Committee is working on a Government bill on film censorship at
e moment. The reason for the appeal is the fact that parents are not
ways able to check on the programmes which their children see on tele-
ion. The two organisations further advocate that the bill should
so contain rules forbidding indecent advertising of films.

The Finland-Swedish weekly "Församlingsbladet" supports the appeal. I an editorial it says that although the Church recognizes the value d freedom, there must be certain limits to this freedom in respect of tings that may encourage a mentality of brute force, crime, or immorality.

rge Crowds Attend Lectures on Seriousness of the Time.

This autumn large audiences have flocked to the "Old Church" in lsinki (Helsingfors) to attend a topical series of lectures on the rious problems of the time given by Professor Osmo Tiililä. The bjects have been "The WorldSituation and Faith", "From Doubt to Faith", he Universe", and "The Miracles and Faith". Simultaneously with this ofessor Aimo T. Nikolainen has lectured in the Kalio (Berghälls) urch on the Book of the Revelation and here, too, the church has been owded.

peal for Joining in "One Minute Prayer".

The Head of the Home Mission in Helsinki (Helsingfors), Mr. Arvid n Martens, has published an appeal to all Christians in Finland to in in the so-called "One Minute Prayer"-movement which was started September by the "Fellowship of Intercession for Spiritual Revival". . von Martens suggests that there should be a "One Minute Prayer" at on every day in Finland.

4 New Divinity Students in Finland.

There is still a great influx of Divinity students in Finland. is autumn 187 new undergraduates, including 68 women, have signed for the Theological Faculty at Helsinki, and 7 for the Swedish eological Faculty at Åbo (Turku), 3 of whom are women.

6 Million Finnish Marks for Christian-Social Purposes.

The annual collection for Christian-social purposes of the utheran National Church in Finland this year amounted to 76 million innish Marks. They were collected by 16,000 volunteers and 275,000 eople have contributed. As in earlier years, the Patrons of the ollection, the 12th of its kind, were President and Mrs. Urho Kekkonen.

inland's Minister of Education to Visit the Pope.

Mr. Heikki Hosia, the Minister of Education in Finland, and a ecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will attend the celebrations eginning in the Vatican on November 4th on the occasion of the 80 years' irthday of Pope John XXIII.

isruption of the Pentecostal Movement in Finland.

2,000 of the 40,000 Pentecostal believers in Finland have broken way from the Movement and started a separate "Finland's Free Pentecostal Movement". The final breach was reached at a meeting in Helsinki (Helsingfors) in October, but the new movement actually started ndependent work already a year ago.

NORWAY

Separation of State and Church May Become Acute.

In a statement in the "Rogaland Avis" Bishop Fridjov Birkeli, Stavanger, has given his view on a possible separation of the State and the Lutheran National Church. The Bishop feels that, although not acute at the moment, the thought is not a new one and that many of the present members of the Church would welcome it.

The crux of the matter, the Bishop emphasizes, is whether State and Church can agree on an interpretation of tolerance. If the State should attempt to change the Confession of the Church, according to its own conception of tolerance, the Church would not be able to continue the partnership with the State.

Formerly it was the members of the Church who were keen to maintain the order of a National Church whereas the politicians agitated for a separation, Bishop Birkeli goes on. To-day it seems to be the politicians who want to keep the National Church. But a presupposition for this must be an acknowledgment of the spiritual independence of the Church.

The Bishop admits that he would regret the abolition of a National Church if it should result in the disappearance of religious instruction at school. But even if a separation should become reality, he believes that in the future the nation will be increasingly interested in the message of the Church, a tendency that can be noted elsewhere in Europe. "The fear of the morrow, the shadow of a nuclear war has brought Europe to look, once more, for the message which the Church has to offer."

Less Religious Instruction in the Schools in Oslo?

A majority of the Curriculum Committee of the 9-year unified school system in Oslo has advocated that the total number of weekly classes in religious instruction in the primary school (the first 7 years) should be reduced from altogether 16 to 14, and that there should be only 2 weekly classes in the subject in the advanced school (8th and 9th years). A minority wanted totally 16 or 15 weekly classes in the primary and 4 in the advanced school.

In a letter to school authorities, ministers, and parochial councils in Oslo, the Bishop of Oslo, Bishop Johannes Smemo, has proposed totally 17 weekly classes in the primary and 4 in the advanced school.

The final decision rests with the Oslo school authorities.

The Film about Hans Nielsen Hauge a Success.

The new Norwegian film about the great spiritual leader in Norwegian Church life, Hans Nielsen Hauge, which was shown during October in a number of cinemas all over the country, proved an unqualified success. Several papers call it an event in Norwegian film production, and it is characteristic of its reception that in many places the audience broke out in rounds of applause, something quite unusual in Norway. The film gives an all-round and true picture of the famous lay preacher, who was played by Per Sunderland, and, although some re-

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viewers in religious papers point out that the fundamental religious aspect of his personality has not been sufficiently emphasized, everybody is agreed that also from a religious point of view the film is of great value.

The fact that Norwegian film industry has spent more money on the Hauge film than on any other film is taken by the reviewer in the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" as a sign that a revaluation is taking place in Norwegian cultural life: "Attempts are made to integrate 'religious stuff' into a comprehensive view on history and cultural life."

The Opening Night in Oslo was attended by a number of representatives of the Government, headed by the Prime Minister, the Bishop of Oslo, and many other prominent people in the audience.

New Order for Intercession and Work, the "Oremus".

A new religious Order called "Oremus" has been established in Oslo. At present the society, described as an Order for intercession and work, has 21 Brothers and Sisters and 4 novices, the leader being Mr. Eivind Saxlund, Secretary General. The "Oremus" does not want to constitute a particular party in the Church, but a centre in the Church, based on the Scriptures, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Confession, the Scriptures being supreme authority. The members pledge themselves to daily intercession for one another and for the unity and renewal of the Church. Regular participation in church services and the Eucharist, private confession, and Canonical Hours is stressed.

Agitation for Increased Church Attendance.

In the middle of October a large-scale agitation for increased church attendance was launched in Oslo where volunteers called at half the homes of the Capital with a special invitation to take part in the Sunday service. Posters with the text "The Bells Are Calling - Welcome to Church on Sunday" were put up in 700 places in the city and public conveyances.

The campaign will last for 4 Sundays until November 12th and will close with the Kirchentag in Oslo, mentioned in the last number of CN.

SWEDEN

24 Million Swedish Crowns for Foreign Missions in One Year.

According to statistics in the annual report of the Swedish Missionary Periodical which has just been published, the 19 Swedish missionary societies had a total income of 24 million Swedish Crowns. The societies employ altogether 1,560 missionaries, of whom 541 are men and 1,019 women. Native staff members amount to 20,631. In 1960 21,000 candidates for baptism and 11,500 children of Christian parents were baptized. The number of members entitled to receive Holy Communion in the mission churches totals roughly 1,2 million. Swedish missions run 28 hospitals, last year having treated nearly 50,000 patients, and 137 policlinics with more than 1/2 million patients. There are furthermore 1,400 primary schools and 260 higher general schools, secondary schools, and technical schools.

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121 Parish Churches without Encumbent as from January 1st.

As from January 1st, 1962, there will be 121 parish churches in Sweden without an encumbent as a result of the new distribution of parishes coming into force on that date. The regulation of parishes is aimed at abolishing encumbencies with only few inhabitants, predominantly country parishes, and increasing instead the number of clergymen in the ever growing urban districts. Worst hit will be the Diocese of Skara where 53 parish churches will be without their own vicar. In the Diocese of Lund the number is 23 and in Visby 18.

The re-distribution means that there can be no normal Sunday services in the churches affected, but attempts will be made to make good the deficiencies by the help of retired clergymen and laymen whom the Bishops will give permission to preach.

The Bishop of Lund Dr. Martin Lindström says in connection with the coming into effect of the new Act about the Regulation of Parishes: "It is a serious matter that the Government has adopted the principle of not increasing the number of clergymen in spite of the great increase in population. The Church cannot tolerate this. There is a crying need for ministers in big towns and in urban areas altogether."

54 Small Churches in 9 Years.

From 1952 to 1960 54 so-called small churches to be used by the Lutheran National Church were built all over Sweden, the Secretary of the Small Churches Movement, Rev. G. Rudborg, Gothenburg, said recently. Such churches cost 150,000 - 500,000 Swedish Crowns to erect, and two of three of this kind in a suburb are to be preferred for one big and expensive church, the Small Churches Movement maintains.

Convocation of Canterbury and the Swedish Lutheran National Church.

At its next assembly the Convocation of Canterbury will deal with the question of the relation of the Anglican Church to the Swedish Lutheran National Church, now that the latter has given women access to the ministry. A report on the matter will be laid before the assembly by a Committee, headed by Canon Milburn. This report has attracted some attention in Church quarters in Sweden. It says here that the Committee approves of the decision of 1954 about intercommunion and of a decision to permit Swedish clergymen to be invited to preach in Anglican churches, but feels that the invitation cannot be extended to include also women ministers. The Committee further advocates that Swedish clergymen in England should be allowed to administer the Eucharist, but in this matter, too, women are excepted. As to Anglican participation in Swedish episcopal consecrations, the question is to be decided by the Archbishop of Canterbury personally. But the report adds that the assistance of an Anglican bishop may be interpreted as an approval of the present practice of ordination of the Swedish Church.

Since the ordination of the first Swedish women ministers, no Anglican bishops have taken part in the consecration of a Swedish bishop.

New President of the Swedish Missionary Council.

Having been the President of the Swedish Missionary Council for 10 years, the former Head of the Swedish Evangelical Missionary Society Mr. Nils Dahlberg, has now retired. His successor is the Mission Secretary Eric Strutz of the Baptist Union.

Strong Feeling of Unity among Free Church Youth.

120 representatives of Free Church youth in Sweden attending the first joint Free Church Youth Assembly, conducted at the end of October at Farsta, have advocated closer co-operation among the Free Church youth organizations. Besides young people from all the 8 denominations affiliated to the Free Church Joint Committee, observers from the Pentecostal Movement, the Salvation Army, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. and other organizations were also present. In lectures and study groups, suggestions were made for practical co-operation, but at the same time it was stressed that the spiritual unity of the 200,000 young people in the Free Churches in Sweden must be the main thing.

Remarkable Conversion in Sweden.

It has caused sensation in Sweden, that a lecturer of the Theological Faculty in Uppsala, Dr. Stig Lindholm, has declared that he intends to leave the Lutheran Church and to join the Roman Catholic Church. Dr. Lindholm has already twice been nominated on the list of candidates for a see which is presented to the Government by the clergy. He was also considered as one of the main candidates for the episcopal election in Västerås in succession to Bishop John Cullberg who will retire on October 1st, 1962. Dr. Lindholm has been a member of a great number of important Church committees.

In this connection the Swedish Press has mentioned that some more High Church theologians in Sweden have joined or will join the Roman Catholic Church.

"Svensk Pastoraltidskrift", the organ of "Kyrklig Samling" (Confessional Front) has expressed, that the conversion to Rome for those who are driven by their conscience to leave the Church of Sweden because of its falling away from God's Word, only substitute one heresy for another one.

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